United Nations A/60/137

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 July 2005

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Item 66 of the provisional agenda*
Advancement of women

Violence against women

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/143 of 22 December 2003, the present report provides information on the legal and policy measures introduced by Member States and the activities undertaken by entities of the United Nations system and other organizations to address violence against women migrant workers. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for future action.

* A/60/150.

05-43441 (E) 150805

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in resolution 58/143 of 22 December 2003, while expressing deep concern at the continuing reports of grave abuses and acts of violence committed against women migrant workers, urged concerned Governments to strengthen further their national efforts to protect and promote the rights and welfare of women migrant workers, including through sustained bilateral, regional, interregional and international cooperation, by developing strategies and joint action. The Assembly set forth a series of measures to prevent violence against women migrant workers, punish perpetrators, and provide support and assistance to victims of such violence.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixtieth session on the problem of violence against women migrant workers and on the implementation of the resolution, taking into account updated information from the organizations of the United Nations system, in particular the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, as well as the International Organization for Migration and other relevant sources, including non-governmental organizations.

3. The present report is submitted in accordance with the above-mentioned request and is based, inter alia, on information received from Member States and entities of the United Nations system, as well as the discussions of intergovernmental and expert bodies.

4. The issue of violence against women migrant workers was on the agenda of the General Assembly each year from 1992 to 1997. The issue has since been considered by the Assembly on a biennial basis. The Commission on Human Rights deals with the issue on a biennial basis, under the item concerning specific groups and individuals. The Commission has adopted specific resolutions on violence against women migrant workers and resolutions on the human rights of migrants.

5. Violence against women migrant workers is addressed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,[1] which calls for special measures to eliminate such violence, and for services for this group of women (e.g., see paras. 125b, 125c and 126d). The Platform includes migrant women among the groups of women particularly vulnerable to violence (para. 116). As part of the 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Member States provided information on action taken to give effect to the critical areas of concern. Of the 134 responses received, 129 covered the question of violence against women. Some referred also to measures to protect migrant women from violence and abuse (see E/CN.6/2005/2 and Corr.1).

6. The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2004: Women and International Migration,[2] prepared by the Division or the Advancement of Women, highlighted in particular the gender dimensions of international migration. In addition to a discussion of the linkages among migration, poverty and sustainable development, the Survey inquired in particular into the gender dimensions of family and labour migration, refugee and displaced persons, human trafficking and smuggling, as well as into the gender roles and integration of migrant women in

their host communities, and put forward a series of recommendations to improve the situation of migrant, refugee and trafficked women.

II. Measures taken by Member States

7. As at 16 May 2005, 22 Member States (Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belize, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Jamaica, Japan, Indonesia, Latvia, Mexico, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia, Spain and United Republic of Tanzania) and one Observer State (Holy See) had responded to the Secretary-General's request for information relating to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 58/143. The response by one Member State (United Arab Emirates) received after the deadline as input for the previous report on this subject (A/58/161), has also been reflected.

8. Many of the Member States which provided information for the present report, including Azerbaijan, Belize, Japan, Mexico, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Spain and the United Arab Emirates, also submitted information on legislative measures adopted to combat trafficking in women and girls.[5] Some, including Croatia, Denmark, Japan, Latvia and the Philippines, reported on the elaboration of national plans of action and/or the creation of national mechanisms to combat trafficking in women and girls. Denmark, Japan, the Holy See, Mexico and the Philippines also provided information on measures to prevent trafficking in women and girls. Belize, Denmark, Japan, the Holy See and Mexico reported on measures to provide support to victims of human trafficking.

A. Statistical information

9. Several responses highlighted the feminization of migration. Indonesia indicated that women constituted more than 70 per cent of the 350,000 Indonesian workers who migrate annually, while Jamaican women accounted for 60 per cent of the migrant labour force recorded by the Government. Mexican women constituted approximately 45 per cent of Mexican citizens living in the United States of America, mostly working in factories, workshops, domestic service, restaurants and small shops, without labour protection. On average, 15,000 Filipino women migrated annually overseas for domestic work.

10. Belize, Spain and the United Republic of Tanzania indicated that they collected data on violence against women. Denmark planned to undertake an annual statistical overview of women and children staying at women's crisis centres, and studies of rape and domestic violence were under preparation. In Jamaica and Japan, work was under way to develop methodologies for the collection of national data on female migrant workers. No statistical or other relevant data with regard to violence against women migrant workers were available in Armenia and Mongolia, although a survey of the status and consequences of Mongolian citizens working abroad had been conducted in Mongolia.

11. Azerbaijan, Croatia, Egypt and Jamaica indicated that no cases of violence against women migrant workers had been recorded.

B. Legal measures

1. International obligations

12. As at 17 June 2005, 30 States had become parties to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which entered into force on 1 July 2003. Of the Member States reporting, Azerbaijan, Belize, Egypt, El Salvador, the Philippines and the Syrian Arab Republic had ratified the Convention. Several Member States drew attention to their adherence to other international and regional human rights instruments and to International Labour Organization conventions relevant to the situation of women migrant workers.

2. Domestic legal measures

13. Reporting States provided general information about legislation, in particular criminal law, concerning violence against women, including women migrant workers. Under the 1999 Azerbaijan Criminal Code, rape, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization or other acts involving sexual violence are punishable by deprivation of liberty for 10 to 15 years, or life imprisonment. The Federal Penal Code of the United Arab Emirates addresses violence against women, providing for the punishment of any person committing such violence. In the Syrian Arab Republic, felonies and misdemeanours against persons are dealt with in articles 533 and 554 of the Penal Code. The Sexual Offences Act 1998 of the United Republic of Tanzania provides for stiff sentences for acts of violence against women. Spain's Organic Law 1/2004 on measures of integral protection on gender violence addresses violence in a multidisciplinary, integrated manner. The Danish Minister of Justice was expected to introduce a bill in the second quarter of 2005 to amend the Administration of Justice Act so as to strengthen the legal position of victims of rape and other severe sexual crimes.

14. Several Member States enacted legislation on domestic violence. In Indonesia, Law No. 23/2004 on the elimination of domestic violence aims to ensure the safety and security of women and prevent them from becoming victims of violence, especially violence in the family. On 2 June 2004, Japan amended the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims to include the possibility of court orders prohibiting the spouse to approach the victim and/or requiring the spouse to vacate the domicile. In June 2003, the Danish Parliament adopted a new act authorizing the police, in certain cases, to remove a spouse or cohabitant who displayed violent or threatening behaviour from the common home for a period of time in order to prevent further violence against other members of the household. In Belize, the Domestic Violence Act of 1993 is under review, with the aim of recommending amendments.

15. Argentina, Azerbaijan and Belize reported that they had passed laws to address sexual harassment in the workplace. For instance, article 31 of section 2 of the Azerbaijan Labour Code of September 2004, on the content of collective contracts, requires parties to a collective contract to educate the public about the inadmissibility of verbal abuse and hostile actions in the workplace and the need to take steps to prevent such acts, promote public awareness about sexual harassment in the workplace and implement measures to protect workers against such acts.

16. Some Member States reported on legislative measures that regulate migrant labour. For instance, under the 2001 Mongolian Law on Import and Export of Labour and Experts, labour contracts should be signed in conformity with international legal standards, based on the legislation of the respective countries, and contain social security provisions for migrant workers, especially women. Articles 5, 8 and 13 of the 1999 Azerbaijan Labour Migration Act regulates the modalities for hiring aliens to work in Azerbaijan, as well as Azerbaijani nationals wishing to work abroad. Owing to the high unemployment rate and unfavourable trends in the labour market, the Croatian Government established annual hiring quotas for foreigners. Based on Act 5/2004 on recruitment services, the Slovak Republic grants foreigners the same legal status as its citizens if they hold work permits and temporary residence permits for purposes of work, or if they are asylum-seekers. Civil Service Regulation No. 596/2004 grants foreigners in the Slovak Republic free access to certain public sector posts only. Ministerial report No. 1/738 of 4 July 2004, issued by the Ministry of Labour in Saudi Arabia, declared a ban on all forms of people smuggling. Armenia was working on a draft law which would regulate labour migration and which contained provisions regarding violence against women migrant workers.

17. Azerbaijan, the Slovak Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic indicated that, under their labour legislation, foreign migrant workers were not treated differently from their own citizens. A special chapter of the Azerbaijani labour code addresses the labour rights of women, including their realization.

18. Denmark's Parliament amended the Danish Aliens Act with effect from 1 July 2004. This amendment introduced a 10-year waiting period during which a foreign citizen normally cannot be granted residency on the basis of marriage to a person living in Denmark. This waiting period applies in cases in which final judgement against the foreign citizen has been passed for a crime against a former spouse or cohabitant which could have carried a punishment of imprisonment, suspended imprisonment or another criminal sanction that involves or allows deprivation of liberty.

19. In accordance with articles 7 and 8 of Argentina's recently adopted Law No. 25871, migrants living in the country have the right of access to health and education, independent of their migration status.

20. Indonesia had organized consultations and workshops aimed at harmonizing national laws with international instruments on the elimination of violence against women, in particular general recommendation 19 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, on violence against women,[4] and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

C. Policy measures

1. National strategies and mechanisms

21. In Denmark, Indonesia, the Slovak Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania, national strategies to combat violence against women are in place. Denmark reported that its national plan of action on violence against women has a special focus on ethnic minority women. The plan of the Slovak Republic also addresses migrant women. El Salvador's programme for the promotion of mental

health and integral well-being includes measures to educate women workers, including women migrant workers about domestic violence. Costa Rica is working towards the establishment of policies for the promotion of the rights of migrant workers to health and education.

22. Some Member States reported on the establishment of mechanisms to coordinate activities on violence against women and/or on migration. The Indonesian National Commission on Violence against Women, established in 1998, addresses violations of women's human rights in general, and violence against women in particular. Belize has set up a multisectoral committee to develop a plan of action on violence against women and to assist in monitoring its implementation. In Mexico in 2004, the National Institute on Migration and the National Institute on Women (INMUJERES) signed a general agreement to strengthen coordinated action on the promotion and protection of the human rights of women workers, including women migrant workers. In Costa Rica, institutional coordination is in place to better promote and protect the rights of migrant workers. The Pontifical Council of the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People of the Holy See, which for many years has worked to promote the well-being of migrants and itinerant peoples, recently addressed specific forms of violence directed at women migrants.

2. Prevention measures

23. Belize, Denmark, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania carried out awareness-raising initiatives and information campaigns on violence against women in print, electronic and other media. These included the production of publications, brochures, pamphlets, posters, magnets and pencils, the broadcasting of public announcements via radio, television and newspapers, and the screening of television programmes and documentaries. For instance, Denmark reported implementing a series of awareness-raising initiatives with a specific focus on ethnic minority women, including: an information campaign on gender equality to inform this group of women of their rights in relation to the labour market, marriage and violence; a public campaign on halting violence against women aimed at disseminating information in different languages on where to seek help in cases of violence; a campaign aimed at sensitizing men to the issue of violence against women; outreach to women's shelters to raise awareness about the specific problems faced by women from ethnic minorities and their children; and a series of television programmes about domestic violence, including special themes concerning foreign women and wife battering.

24. El Salvador produced a popular version of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in order to raise awareness of the rights of migrant workers. A documentary was produced with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Organization for Migration to sensitize the general population about the risks of undocumented migration. The United Republic of Tanzania translated into user-friendly language and widely disseminated to the general public international and national legal texts, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Land Act No. 4 and Village Land Act No. 5 of 1999. It also sensitized women and men about the Sexual Offence (Special Provisions) Act of 1998, which resulted in women and men filing cases of violations of their rights. Mexico undertook a series of public awareness initiatives, including a campaign on women migrants, to raise awareness about the human rights of

migrant women and to reflect upon the living conditions of Mexican women migrant workers living in the United States of America. Costa Rica was working on strategies to educate the general public about the positive contribution of migrant workers and to prevent discrimination against them.

25. The Philippines provided information on safe migration to all prospective migrant workers through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration. Mandatory pre-departure orientation seminars, pre-employment orientation seminars, travel advisories, comprehensive orientation seminars for entertainers and special courses for women in vulnerable jobs, such as domestic workers and performing artists, were conducted on a regular basis. Similarly, Saudi Arabia provided to all immigrant women and men guidebooks containing information on the human rights of migrants.

26. Azerbaijan, Belize, El Salvador, Indonesia and Jamaica have carried out capacity-building activities to train governmental officials, law-enforcement agents, police officers, social workers, community leaders and other professionals on the issue of violence against women migrant workers. For instance, a national workshop was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, in coordination with the Institute of Human Rights of the University of Central America José Simeón Cañas to sensitize representatives of various institutions about the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and ways to harmonize national legislation with the Convention. Jamaica, with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration, carried out a migration management programme in order to build the capacity of governmental officials to manage migration effectively. Belize has trained police officers, social workers and community leaders in the dynamics of family violence and basic intervention techniques. Moreover, a domestic violence training manual has been initiated and was expected to be published in the latter part of 2005.

27. Some countries implemented measures to improve police response to violence against women migrant workers. For instance, Belize set up family violence units at major police stations nationwide.

28. Other activities to prevent violence against women migrant workers were reported by Denmark, where, since 2003, the police have offered assault alarms for women at risk of being abused. These devices, when activated, send the victim's location directly to a control centre for relay to the nearest police station. Since 2004, inmates of Danish prisons convicted of crimes of violence and who have displayed continued violent behaviour have been offered treatment in anger management. The Ministry of Justice is considering making such treatment mandatory as a condition for a suspended sentence for violence. Jamaica established Jamaican liaison services in the United States of America and Canada to ensure, inter alia, proper work conditions for and protection of Jamaican migrant workers. In order to improve the management of labour migration and avoid situations of abuse, Jamaica was working to implement a programme to strengthen border control systems.

3. Measures of support

29. Denmark, Indonesia, Pakistan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Saudi Arabia reported the establishment of shelters and crisis centres. For example, three

crisis centres were established in Pakistan — in Sahiwal, Vehari and Karachi — to provide assistance to women in distress. Denmark reported the establishment of a nationwide network of crisis centres for persons exposed to forced marriage and two shelters for children and young women of an ethnic minority background who had been exposed to forced marriages or who needed support owing to other family conflicts. El Salvador was raising funds to establish a shelter for migrants and victims of human trafficking.

30. Denmark, Indonesia and Pakistan established, or planned to establish, telephone hotlines to provide assistance to women victims of violence. Access to legal counselling and assistance for victims of violence was available in Denmark, Mexico, Pakistan, Spain and the United Republic of Tanzania. Programmes to provide victims of violence with psychological, social and medical assistance existed in Denmark, Mexico, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Spain. The Ministry of Health of Belize developed a protocol for the management of family violence cases at hospitals and health centres. The Mexican National Institute of Migration, with the support of the Mexican Red Cross, established a programme of humanitarian support to vulnerable people, which included the installation of two mobile clinics in the areas of San Luis Río Colorado, Sonoyta, Sásabe and Naco in the state of Sonora where there has been the largest number of migrant deaths along the border with the United States of America.

31. Some Member States, such as Costa Rica and the Slovak Republic, have carried out programmes and projects aimed at facilitating the integration of immigrants into the host society, including through the revision of school curricula and sensitization measures on multiculturalism. The Holy See reported on support activities for women migrant workers victims of violence, implemented by Catholic agencies.

4. Bilateral, regional and international cooperation

32. Argentina, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Indonesia and Mexico reported the conclusion of bilateral agreements to facilitate orderly migration and enhance cooperation in the promotion and protection of the rights of women migrant workers. At the regional level, Argentina in December 2002, signed the agreement on residency for nationals of Mercosur, Bolivia and Chile and the agreement on regularization of nationals of Mercosur, Bolivia and Chile. The former allowed for the freedom of nationals of Mercosur, Bolivia and Chile to reside in any of the States which had signed the agreement.

33. Jamaica was working to enhance cooperation with international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration, the Organization of American States and the International Labour Organization. In July 2004 and February 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the International Organization for Migration co-hosted a symposium on the migration of people beyond national borders. Denmark was establishing a network of embassies to act as bridge builders between national authorities and women and assist with the practical arrangements for the travel of women to their home countries.

III. Measures taken by United Nations intergovernmental bodies

34. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 58/143, a number of intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system have continued work on violence against women migrant workers. Their activities are summarized below.

A. Commission on Human Rights

35. At its sixtieth session, held from 15 March to 23 April 2004, the Commission on Human Rights addressed the situation of women migrants in several resolutions. Specifically, in resolution 2004/49 on violence against women migrant workers, the Commission called upon all Governments to take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by women migrant workers and encouraged them to seek ways to eliminate causes that put them at risk. The Commission also called upon concerned Governments to undertake a series of measures, including penal sanctions to punish traffickers and perpetrators of violence against women migrant workers, providing assistance to victims of violence and trafficking, such as counselling, legal and consular assistance, temporary shelter and other measures that would allow them to be present during the judicial process, safeguarding their dignified return to their country of origin and establishing reintegration and rehabilitation schemes for returning women migrant workers.

36. In resolution 2004/53, on the human rights of migrants, the Commission drew attention to the particular situation of women and children and the need to promote and protect their human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their migratory condition. Measures called for include information campaigns to clarify opportunities, limitations and rights in the event of migration, so as to enable everyone, in particular women, to make informed decisions and to prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking and utilizing dangerous means of access that put their lives and physical integrity at risk.

37. In resolution 2004/46, on the elimination of violence against women, the Commission expressed its deep concern that some groups of women, including migrant women, might be targeted or vulnerable to violence.

38. In resolution 2004/25, on the right to education, the Commission drew attention to obstacles limiting effective access to education, notably by girls, among them migrant children. The Commission also adopted resolution 2004/56, on the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

39. At its sixty-first session, held from 14 March to 22 April 2005, the Commission adopted resolutions on the right to education (2005/21), elimination of violence against women (2005/41) and the human rights of migrants (2005/47), which also addressed migrant women and girls.

40. A number of special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights devoted attention to the situation of women migrant workers. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, in a report to the Commission at its sixty-first session (E/CN.4/2005/85 and Corr.1), expressed concern about the vulnerability of migrant women to abuse, violence and violations of their human rights. In her assessment, women migrants were at greater risk than men of discrimination and abuse and

suffer double discrimination as women and as foreigners, compounded in some cases by their illegal status. The Special Rapporteur considered that a better understanding of the problems of women and international migration required improvements in the collection, dissemination and analysis of the kind of data that could explain the causes and consequences of those problems, thus providing a firm basis for appropriate policies and programmes.

41. The Special Rapporteur devoted particular attention to the situation of women migrant domestic workers in a report to the Commission at its sixtieth session (E/CN.4/2004/76). In her assessment, the growing demand for household help in developed countries had led to a rise in the number of initiatives and agreements to facilitate female migration for domestic employment, and in spontaneous migration by women. She observed that, by and large, such initiatives could not guarantee decent conditions of employment and respect for the fundamental rights of female migrant domestic workers. She observed also that many women migrant domestic workers end up being sexually abused by the employer, his children or family members, or by other domestic workers living in the same house, and that many were obliged to remain in the home and were repeatedly sexually violated. There were also reports of large numbers of suicides among female migrant domestic workers, who frequently suffered from depression. Moreover, she noted that women who migrated as domestic workers ran a high risk of being victims of trafficking, primarily because of absence of a written contract of employment and that women migrating under such conditions often discovered upon arrival that they had been recruited for a different job from that agreed upon.

42. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, in a report to the Commission at its sixty-first session (E/CN.4/2005/72 and Corr.1), analysed the interconnections between violence against women and HIV/AIDS, considering violence both as a cause and a consequence of HIV. Throughout the report, she placed emphasis on the intersectionality of violence against women and HIV, as well as the multiplicity of types of discrimination experienced by women living with HIV, particularly by migrant, refugee, minority and other marginalized groups of women. The Special Rapporteur underlined the need to apply an integrated approach to tackle the impact of gender inequality, while at the same time reaching specific risk groups.

43. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in a report to the Commission at its sixty-first session (E/CN.4/2005/71), outlined the content and scope of her mandate, the legal framework for her action and proposed methods of work. As irregular migrants may become victims of trafficking, she intends to consider the links among migration, trafficking and counter-terrorism. The Special Rapporteur also intends to take action in cases in which efforts to combat or prevent trafficking may have an impact on the human rights of the persons concerned, be they migrants, asylum-seekers or citizens.

B. Human rights treaty bodies

44. In the period under review, some of the treaty bodies established under international human rights instruments addressed issues related to migration, including the enjoyment of human rights by migrant workers and their families, as well as the situation of trafficked women and children. The specific issue of

violence against women migrant workers was taken up primarily by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its twenty-eighth to thirty-first sessions.[5]

45. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women voiced concern about the increasing number of women who migrated or emigrated to escape from poverty, and who could become victims of various forms of violence, exploitation and trafficking. The Committee was concerned about discrimination suffered by immigrant, refugee and minority women and girls, particularly with respect to education, health, employment and violence against women, and in regard to residency status. It addressed the situation of foreign women who experienced domestic violence but who did not seek assistance as their residency permits were linked to those of their spouses. The Committee called for measures to alleviate poverty, to protect women migrant workers and to eliminate discrimination against refugee, migrant and minority women and girls, including in regard to their residency status.

46. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination addressed related issues at its sixty-sixth session,[6] and was concerned about the mandatory detention of illegal migrants, including asylum-seekers, in particular when such detention affected women, children, unaccompanied minors and those considered stateless. It was also concerned about the situation of women migrant domestic workers, their working conditions and legal protection. The Committee addressed the situation of women belonging to vulnerable groups and also considered instances of multiple discrimination. The Committee called for the review of detention policies, effective measures to prevent and redress the problems faced by female domestic workers, including debt bondage, passport retention, illegal confinement, rape and physical assault, and measures to address the special needs of women belonging to minority and other vulnerable groups, in particular female travellers, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.

47. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, at its thirty-third session, raised issues of ill-treatment, particularly of migrant women, at the hands of their spouses or partners, which often remained unreported for reasons of economic dependency and fear of deportation (see E/2005/22). The Committee called for effective support measures for victims of domestic violence, especially migrant women with precarious residency status. The Committee also called for alternative means to combat the phenomenon of forced marriage involving immigrant women.

48. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, at its thirty-seventh session, addressed the situation of children, especially girls, working on the street and as domestic servants in conjunction with smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons and ineffective implementation of labour laws and mechanisms to control child labour (see CRC/C/143). The Committee recommended several measures to address the situation, including the strengthening of cooperation with countries from which cross-border child labour originated in order to combat the economic exploitation of those children.

IV. Measures taken by entities of the United Nations system

49. A number of entities of the United Nations system provided information on their efforts to combat violence against women migrant workers.

A. Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

50. The issue of violence against women migrant workers was a priority area of work for the Division for the Advancement of Women during the period under review. The Division completed the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2004: Women and International Migration[2] for submission to the General Assembly. As part of the preparatory process, the Division organized a consultative meeting on mobility and how it affects women in Malmö, Sweden, in 2003, which brought together experts from various regions to discuss the gender aspects of migration. The World Survey was launched on 3 March 2005 at a panel discussion organized by the Division during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

51. The Division participated in the second coordination meeting on international migration, organized by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and held in New York on 15 and 16 October 2003, and made a written contribution and oral presentation on the issue of trafficking in women and girls. The question of violence against women migrant workers will also be addressed in the in-depth study on violence against women, requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 58/185 of 22 December 2003.

B. Economic Commission for Africa

52. The Economic Commission for Africa addressed violence against women through reports and workshops on human rights education, as well as initiatives to raise awareness of violence against women and girls. However, no specific activity focusing on women migrant workers was undertaken during the period under review.

C. Economic Commission for Europe

53. The Economic Commission for Europe, in April 2005, hosted the expert group meeting on the theme "Violence against women: a statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches to overcome them", organized in collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the World Health Organization. The meeting developed recommendations for improving the quality and availability of data at the national level. The Commission is planning follow-up work.

D. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

54. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean organized the Hemispheric Conference in International Migration: Human Rights and the Traffic in Persons in the Americas, held in Santiago in November 2002. The Conference aimed at strengthening cooperation among Governments in the field of international migration to help identify mechanisms for protecting and promoting the human rights of migrants and for combating and preventing trafficking in persons. The Commission also organized, in collaboration with the United Nations Population

Fund, a side event about migration during the ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City in June 2004.

55. The Commission prepared a number of publications on the issue of international migration, including the publication entitled *In Search of Work: International Migration of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: Selected Bibliography*.[7]

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

56. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) compiled information on the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the related Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in the ESCWA region. ESCWA prepared a report on the positive changes in each country of the region with regard to the implementation of the Protocol, and identified possible areas of cooperation between ESCWA and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

F. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

57. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), organized a Subregional training workshop on the elimination of violence against women in partnership with men, held in New Delhi in December 2003. Moreover, the ESCAP regional high-level intergovernmental meeting, held in September 2004 to review the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted the Bangkok Communiqué which mentioned the lack of policies, legislations and programmes to protect the human rights of women migrant workers as a gap to be acknowledged in the implementation of the Platform in the Asia and Pacific region. A paper entitled "Moving Beijing forward: Gaps and challenges: violence against women and trafficking" was prepared for the high-level meeting. A discussion paper entitled "Women in international trade and migration: examining the globalized provision of care services", has recently been published.

58. During the period under review, ESCAP has been working in partnership with a network of non-governmental organizations working on migration issues in the Asia and Pacific region (the Migrant Assistance Programme) on initiatives related to human trafficking. ESCAP is currently working on the organization of an expert group meeting on the promotion and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with particular emphasis on violence against women and trafficking in women, to be held in Bangkok in October 2005.

G. United Nations Development Programme

59. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) implemented several activities on migration and human trafficking. For instance, in Belarus, a joint initiative of UNDP and the European Union aimed at strengthening the national

capacity and coordination of governmental agencies to combat trafficking in women and reduce illegal migration both into Belarus and the European Union.

60. The UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava undertook an analytical study based on recent surveys to explore links between trafficking and human development. The study was carried out by experts in the areas of economic migration, poverty and human development and connected with the Academy of Science, Russian Federation. It called for a review of the existing restrictive migration policies that allowed for trafficking and for effective prevention strategies to address the root causes of trafficking.

61. In Nepal, the joint United Nations initiative on trafficking, led by UNDP, resulted in the establishment of the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking. The annual report of the Office for 2004 focused on conflict and trafficking, and made visible the links among trafficking, migration and sex work and the nexus with HIV/AIDS as a result of armed conflict. Advocacy efforts were undertaken to increase closer cooperation and coordination among countries members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and to pave the way for the establishment of a regional rapporteur on trafficking in women and children.

H. United Nations Development Fund for Women

62. The United Nations Development Fund for Women continued its Asia and Pacific and Arab States regional programme on migration, launched in 2001. This programme, carried out in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and the Philippines as countries of origin, and China (Hong Kong), Jordan and Thailand as countries of destination, focuses on poor women migrant workers, especially domestic workers. It is aimed at empowering women migrant workers by helping to create an enabling policy and an institutional and socio-economic environment to ensure equal access of women to opportunities, resources and benefits at all stages of the migration process. At the global and regional levels, the programme succeeded in, inter alia, building a knowledge base on trends in women's migration in the Asian region, addressing migration from a gender perspective, and creating regional policy dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination on forms of protection for women migrant workers. At the national level, the programme succeeded in bringing about some legislative and policy changes in Jordan, Indonesia and Nepal.

I. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

63. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) addressed violence against women migrant workers in the context of human trafficking and forced labour. In 2002, UNESCO in partnership with the Institute of Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, began a project, "Together with migrants", aimed at promoting the integration of women migrant workers in the urban, social and economic fabric of society through training in life and basic skills, vocational training, career counselling, family planning, health and rights. In recent years, the project has broadened its partnerships to include contemporary Chinese artists in order to encourage, through contemporary art, non-

discriminatory public perceptions of women migrant workers. UNESCO also implemented several projects on the issue of trafficking in women and girls in Western Africa and Asia.

J. International Labour Organization

64. The International Labour Organization (ILO) in May 2005 published a global report, *A Global Alliance against Forced Labour*, in follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 2005. The report looked at the emerging forms of forced labour that affect migrant workers, particularly irregular migrants in rich and poor destination countries, and identified poverty and discrimination based on sex and ethnic origin as major determinants of human trafficking.

65. As part of its efforts to address the social dimensions of globalization, ILO focused on the interlinkages among forced labour, child labour, illegal migration and trafficking. ILO derived its mandate against trafficking from a wide range of relevant conventions, particularly those on forced and child labour, and the protection of migrant workers, in addition to a wealth of other instruments on equality of rights, labour inspection, employment services and employment policy, among others.

V. International Organization for Migration

66. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been particularly concerned about the interrelationship between gender-based violence and migration, one manifestation of which was trafficking in women and girls. IOM continued to raise the profile of trafficking and violence against women migrants in the international arena, assisting Governments in combating trafficking in women, and helping victims of trafficking.

67. IOM provided assistance to Governments in the various fields enumerated in General Assembly resolution 58/143, including training and capacity-building; strengthening of legislation and other mechanisms at the national level, facilitation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and data collection, research and dissemination.

68. IOM implemented several projects relevant to women migrant workers in various countries, including: training of female border guards in Azerbaijan; preventing trafficking through counselling and self-employment services in Ethiopia; establishing a migration information centre for the prevention of irregular migration and the trafficking of human beings in Hungary; mitigating the irregular migration of Congolese women in Kinshasa through community stabilization initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; initiating awareness-raising on the rights and welfare of migrants for governmental officials, employers, migrants and host community members in Thailand; and capacity-building for the protection of vulnerable labour migrants in Asia.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

69. Violence against women migrant workers remains an issue of concern for Member States and entities of the United Nations system. While no specific legislation on violence against women migrant workers was adopted by Member States in the period under review, legislation to protect women from all forms of violence and to prevent discrimination and sexual harassment in relation to employment also benefits migrant women. Some efforts are under way to better regulate labour migration, including regulations to protect women migrant workers from violence. Policy measures, such as national strategies and national coordinating mechanisms to combat violence against women, as well as prevention strategies and measures of support for victims of violence, also benefit migrant women. In addition, a number of countries have put in place targeted measures directed at either migrant women workers or immigrant women in general, such as support services for immigrant women victims of violence. A number of countries of origin and destination of migrant labour have concluded bilateral and regional agreements to regulate the employment of workers, and have participated in international initiatives aimed at enhancing cooperation in the promotion and protection of the rights of women migrant workers.

70. However, no information was provided on the impact of the measures taken, on trends in violence against women migrant workers, or on surveys that might have been conducted on this issue. Given that migrant women engage in many different types of work, at different levels of skill (agriculture, textile industry, domestic work, health and social services, tourism (see World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2004: Women and International Migration)), more information is needed on the settings in which violence occurs, or the use by migrant women in general, and migrant women workers in particular, of the support services that may be available.

71. Intergovernmental and expert bodies, as well as entities of the United Nations system, have continued to include the situation of women migrant workers in their work, with a view, inter alia, to preventing violence against this group of women. Further efforts are needed to ascertain the scope and impact of measures taken so as to ensure that, on the one hand, women migrant workers can fully enjoy their rights and on the other, abuse and violence against them is effectively combated.

72. To more effectively prevent and eliminate violence against women migrant workers, greater efforts are needed to assess the effectiveness of general legislative measures and of policy, prevention and support measures on violence against women in regard to women migrant workers who are victims, or are at risk of becoming victims, of violence. Attention needs to be given to the effectiveness of such measures in preventing the different forms of violence experienced by migrant women in the workplace and in family and community settings.

73. States should more systematically put in place targeted prevention measures, including comprehensive awareness-raising initiatives, to educate migrant women and the general public about the rights of women migrant workers. Education campaigns should highlight the positive contribution made

by women migrant workers, especially to dispel misinformation that leads to xenophobic and racist responses in destination countries and which can put migrant women at risk of violence and abuse.

74. **States should ensure that training is provided for governmental officials, law-enforcement agents, police officers, social workers, community leaders and other professionals likely to come into contact with migrant workers so as to sensitize them to the issue of violence against women migrant workers. Greater efforts are needed to strengthen labour laws and enforce employment contracts aimed at protecting migrant workers. Effective measures of support for women migrant victims of violence should also be put in place, including access to shelters, legal aid and medical, psychological, social and economic assistance.**

75. **Measures to combat violence against women migrant workers should be continuously monitored, their impact assessed and further corrective measures taken. Research, surveys and data collection should be improved so as to better understand the phenomenon and design more effective and sustainable responses.**

76. **Efforts are also needed to improve access to legal channels for migration so as to reduce the vulnerability of women seeking to migrate to exploitation, ill-treatment and trafficking. This is particularly important given the current widespread phenomenon of undocumented migration. As women try to reach destination countries, they often suffer from violence and abuse. States should ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of women migrants, irrespective of their immigrant status. Of particular importance is the need to further explore the links between migration and trafficking and to address the two issues accordingly, with a particular focus on the need to protect women from all forms of violence. States, entities of the United Nations system and civil society should be encouraged to place enhanced emphasis on clarifying these links so as to contribute to the development of more effective policies.**

77. **An approach that respects and promotes human rights should guide access to residency and citizenship so that women migrant workers and their families can regularize their status in the host country within a reasonable time period. Residency status independent of that of male family members would enable women migrant workers to integrate more easily with host communities, and would contribute to preventing violence, abuse and exploitation.**

78. **Governments should be encouraged to ratify international instruments which address migration issues, particularly the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols, and all relevant ILO conventions. Furthermore, the special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights on the human rights of migrants, on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, as well as all human rights treaty bodies, should be invited to continue to pay particular attention to the situation of women migrant workers.**

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.IV.4.

[3] The report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in women and girls, requested by the General Assembly in resolution 59/166 of 20 December 2004, will be submitted to the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

[4] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/47/38), chap. I.

[5] Ibid., *Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/58/38) and ibid., *Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/59/38).

[6] Ibid., *Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 18* (A/60/18).

[7] *Women and Development* series, No. 51, LC/L.2028-P (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.G.196).

United Nations A/60/138

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 July 2005

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Item 64 of the provisional agenda*
Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Cooperatives in social development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 58/131 of 22 December 2003, by which the Secretary-General was requested to submit a report focusing on the role of cooperatives in the eradication of poverty. Chapter I of the report provides an introduction that underscores the recognition, both within and outside the United Nations system, of the contribution cooperatives can make to promoting poverty eradication and enhancing social integration. Chapter II discusses how cooperatives contribute to the promotion of income and employment and the enhancement of social integration and cohesion. Chapter II also presents the results of a survey of Member States and apex cooperative organizations seeking their views on the role of cooperatives in poverty eradication. Chapter III examines key challenges facing cooperatives and presents recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

* A/60/150.

05-43448 (E) 150805

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–6	
II.	Cooperatives and poverty reduction	7–53	
	A. Contribution to income and employment	9–34	
	B. Contribution to social integration and cohesion	35–46	
	C. Survey of Member States and apex cooperative organizations	47–53	
III.	Challenges and recommendations	54–64	
Annexes			
I.	List of responding Member States		
II.	List of responding apex cooperative organizations		

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 58/131 of 22 December 2003, entitled "Cooperatives in social development", by which the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Assembly at its sixtieth session, focusing on the role of cooperatives in the eradication of poverty. The theme for the present report is particularly relevant, given that the Assembly will conduct a review of the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration during its sixtieth session and the priority given to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. Moreover, by focusing on the role of cooperatives in poverty reduction, the report highlights the particular contribution of self-help organizations to enable poor people to escape the clutches of dire poverty.

2. The role of cooperatives in social and economic development has been paid greater attention both within and outside the United Nations system during the past decade. The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, specifically recognized the importance of cooperatives in the people-centred approach to development and committed to utilize and develop fully the potential and contribution of cooperatives towards poverty eradication along with the generation of full and productive employment and enhanced social integration.[1]

3. In 1996, the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/58 of 12 December 1996, recognizing the potential of cooperatives and urging that due consideration be given to the role and contribution of cooperatives in achieving social and economic development goals, in particular the World Summit for Social Development goals of poverty eradication, employment creation and enhancement of social integration. Subsequently, in 2002, the Assembly drew the attention of Member States to the draft guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives, which recognize "the cooperative movement as a distinct and major stakeholder in both national and international affairs" (A/56/73-E/2001/68, annex).

4. In 2002, the International Labour Conference adopted recommendation 193, which states that the promotion of cooperatives should be considered as one of the pillars of national and international economic and social development. Specifically mentioned in that recommendation are the roles of cooperatives in responding to their members' needs and the needs of society, including disadvantaged groups, in order to achieve their economic participation and social inclusion and to increasing women's participation in the cooperative movement at all levels. In 2004, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Cooperative Alliance launched a global campaign, "Cooperating out of Poverty", which promotes the cooperative model of business enterprise as a means by which people can help themselves. The campaign suggests new niches within the development framework, such as the Fair Trade concept and the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) process, where the cooperative model of business can be promoted.

5. The European Union has expressed its support for the cooperative movement by developing and adopting in 2003 the Statute for a European Cooperative Society.

6. Although cooperatives have made important contributions towards alleviating poverty in both developed and developing countries, the present report focuses on their role in reducing poverty in developing countries, where the majority of poor people live. The report also includes the results of a survey sent to Member States

and apex cooperative organizations on selected aspects of cooperatives and poverty reduction. In addition, a number of United Nations organizations have provided useful information related to their work in promoting and strengthening cooperatives for poverty reduction.

II. Cooperatives and poverty reduction

7. Cooperatives contribute directly to the eradication of poverty through the economic and social progress of their members and employees and indirectly through stimulating the economies and enhancing the social fabric of the communities in which they operate. Their importance is linked to their purpose and the values and principles they espouse to their members and their communities. In other words, when the objective is to enable poor people to help themselves through economic activity that builds on their strengths and compensates for their weaknesses, then people-centred businesses such as cooperatives have built-in advantages.[2]

8. Over a period of about 150 years, cooperatives have spread over 100 countries and into various sectors and activities encompassing agriculture, fishing, housing, banking, insurance, water, electricity and health care. Cooperatives, as self-advancement organizations, help members achieve their social and economic needs and goals through the establishment and operation of autonomous, member-owned businesses that generate income and employment by pooling limited resources and reducing risks, while simultaneously promoting social integration and cohesion in communities. These business enterprises operate in the private sector but with democratic forms of stakeholder accountability.[3] Unlike other types of private sector business organizations, cooperatives subscribe to a set of core values and principles, as summarized in box 1 below, which emphasize social responsibility and community development.

A. Contribution to income and employment

9. Cooperatives help to create, improve and protect the income and employment opportunities of their members by pooling the limited individual resources of members to create business enterprises that enable them to participate in production, profit-sharing, cost-saving or risk-sharing activities. Cooperatives seek to promote the economic as well as social well-being of individuals who may not otherwise be able to form businesses on their own. The economic added value of cooperatives arises from efficiencies gained in obtaining inputs and services, in utilizing resources and in marketing products or services, which would otherwise be difficult to obtain for individuals acting alone, especially when they are poor.

Box 1
Cooperative values and principles

What is a cooperative?

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

Cooperative values

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Seven principles of cooperatives

Voluntary and open membership

Democratic member control

Member economic participation

Autonomy and independence

Education, training and information

Cooperation among cooperatives

Concern for the community

Source: *Making a Difference: Cooperative Solutions to Global Poverty*, edited by Andrew Bibby and Linda Shaw, the Cooperative College, 2005.

10. Cooperatives play a significant role in agriculture in both developed and developing countries. One common form of cooperative is the farmers' or agricultural production cooperative. With a majority of the poor living and working in the agricultural sector, these types of cooperatives offer an appropriate channel by which the incomes of poor farmers can be increased or stabilized. Such cooperatives provide farmers with the agricultural supplies they need, mechanisms for the sale of their produce and other essential services such as marketing, credit, insurance and transportation. Through mutual insurance and farm credit, members of cooperatives are better able to cope with crop failures and other emergencies.

11. By organizing themselves as cooperatives, small farmers can reap economies of scale through better access to inputs, sharing of common equipment and better access to markets. The increased efficiency that agricultural cooperatives achieve often places them in a better position to compete with larger businesses than an individual farmer operating in isolation. This is particularly relevant in those sectors where farmers have to maintain their competitiveness in the face of increasing globalization.

12. Therefore, by organizing themselves into cooperatives, the rural poor are able to mobilize for collective action and achieve better bargaining power as buyers and sellers in the marketplace. It is estimated, for example, that over 50 per cent of global agricultural output is marketed through cooperatives.[4] One success story of such collective action is the dairy village cooperatives in India, which are organized into state-level marketing federations. Control over marketing is considered the critical feature of the success of these cooperatives in contrast to other dairy cooperatives that simply supply to private companies, which then brand and market the milk. The Indian dairy cooperative network includes 22 state federations in 170 milk unions covering over 285 districts, covers nearly 101,000 village level societies and is owned by nearly 11 million members.[5] The success of the dairy cooperatives in India was replicated by the Milk Vita cooperative in Bangladesh, where about 300,000 households achieved a tenfold increase in earnings.[6]

13. A recent marketing concept relevant for agricultural cooperatives is that of "Fair Trade", whereby producing cooperatives or democratic organizations in developing countries partner with distributors and consumers in developed countries. Under the Fair Trade mechanism, producers are paid a price guaranteed to be above the world price and to cover cost of production. Fair Trade suppliers agree to follow international labour standards and non-discriminatory practices and shun the use of child labour. One example of such practice is found in Timor-Leste, where the largest coffee exporter processes about one third of the country's coffee production and specializes in high-value organic and Fair Trade coffee, which is marketed globally.

14. Cooperatives traditionally have a strong presence in the provision of financial services through credit unions and microfinance entities, which encourage voluntary savings and provide affordable loans and insurance. In many developing countries, credit unions have become the largest source of small savings accounts and loan services, especially for poor people and the working poor in rural areas, where traditional banks or insurance services are beyond the reach of many.

15. Credit unions currently serve an estimated 120 million members in 87 countries around the world and help members increase their incomes, build wealth and security and provide homes for their families.[7] To enable the very poor, who lack the resources to become individual credit union members, credit union associations, such as the World Council of Credit Unions, have established savings and credit associations. Members initially join as a group and eventually become individual members with their own savings accounts and loans.

16. Through an international credit union remittance system, the International Remittance Network (IRnet), many migrants without bank accounts are able to remit funds to their home countries at a low cost and also eventually become credit union members.[8] By creating competition in the market for remittances, IRnet has helped to drive down the remittance fees charged by other providers.

17. Insurance is an important financial service that can reduce the vulnerability of the poor to economic shocks by protecting their assets and reducing their risk. Cooperatives have demonstrated that they can be effective mechanisms for providing microinsurance to the poor against disease, theft, violence and natural disasters. They also serve to inform and educate the working poor, especially those in the informal economy, about the value of insurance. La Equidad, an insurance

cooperative in Colombia, serves more than 3.3 million people as members and customers.[9]

18. The growth of microcredit and microfinance services offered by cooperatives has had significant success in empowering poor people, especially women, to fully realize their productive potential. Access to credit, in particular credit policies and programmes that have been adapted to rural environments and for agriculture, have been at the centre of efforts to empower rural women. The ability of rural women to access such financial services has helped to increase agricultural productivity and promote food security. Moreover, access by rural women to financial services helps to give them a voice and this is increasingly an important factor in implementing rural policies and defending the interest of all farmers, both women and men. As a result, barriers to rural women's participation and representation in agricultural organizations are increasingly being eliminated.

19. Consumer cooperatives are one of the older types of cooperatives. As organizations that focus on retail distribution, these cooperatives enable their members to purchase goods at low cost since purchases are in bulk and any net profits are shared by members. The ability to purchase in bulk enables such cooperatives to lower the prices of retail goods in villages where there is little competition among retailers.

20. In many countries, the market share of consumer cooperatives is significant. In India, for example, it has been estimated that there are more than 25,000 cooperatives with around 700 central wholesale warehouses.[10] In most Central and Eastern European countries, cooperatives have a 20 to 30 per cent share of the market and are particularly strong in rural areas, despite business failures and intense competition.[11]

21. The cooperative principle of concern for community well-being is evident in the number of cooperatives providing basic services, including housing, health, education, water and electricity. The involvement of cooperatives as providers in these sectors highlights their tangible contribution to several Millennium Development Goals, related to raising literacy among children, reducing mortality rates, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases and improving access to safe drinking water and decent housing.

22. With the growth in the number of slum-dwellers outpacing urban improvement in many developing countries, there is an urgent need to expand and scale up proven measures to improve slum conditions and revitalize communities. Cooperatives contribute to the provision of decent housing in various ways, ranging from shared mutual ownership of properties and management cooperatives to house-building cooperatives. Credit unions and savings and mortgage cooperatives, on the other hand, provide assistance in financing house construction and ownership.

23. For slum-dwellers in Central and South America, popular housing alternatives are being developed through the strengthening of sustainable housing cooperatives with support from the Swedish Cooperative Centre.[12] In Guatemala, the project aims to support new housing cooperatives for 125 families who are employed in the informal economy and live in shanty towns and slums. In Nicaragua, the project targets 650 low-income families working in small enterprises and agriculture.

24. Health-care cooperatives can be found in more than 50 countries and provide health services — medical treatment, rehabilitation and health education — to an

estimated 100 million households in the world.[13] Brazil's Unimed, a cooperative health-care provider, has one third of the country's medical practitioners as members. In the Philippines, the ORT Health Plus Scheme provides a wide range of maternity care and other health-care services.

25. With the spread of HIV/AIDS, it has become particularly important for the cooperative movement to address the reversal of the disease. In particular, the loss of members, workers and leaders of cooperatives to the disease in badly affected parts of the world has compromised the viability of cooperative businesses. In Kenya, credit unions such as the Kenya Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives and the Kenya Rural Savings and Credit Societies Union help those suffering from HIV/AIDS by providing emergency loans for medical expenses and hospital fees.[14]

26. Although the proportion of the global population with access to sources of safe drinking water rose from 71 per cent in 1990 to 79 per cent in 2002, there are still about a billion people, mostly in rural areas and urban slums, who lack such access. The success of a water cooperative in Bolivia provides one useful model for the provision of safe drinking water to poor people. The Cooperativa de Servicios Públicos "Santa Cruz" (Saguapac) is a water cooperative with 100,000 members based in a remote city of a million people.[15] This consumer cooperative offers low water charges that are within the reach of unskilled workers. In a study by Birmingham University economists, Saguapac was found to be one of the best run water companies in Latin America, given its low level of water leakage, its high level of staff productivity and its universal metering.

27. Similarly, the cooperative model has been used for the provision of electricity. In Bangladesh, over 79 rural electric cooperatives serve some 4 million customers and reach over 25 million people. With the help of donor organizations, the network continues to expand and is becoming financially self-sustainable.[16] The bill collection rate is over 98 per cent and losses amount to only 16 per cent.

28. In the United Sates of America, some 1,000 electric cooperatives of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association serve 34 million people. The Association also helps developing countries to establish rural electrification cooperatives, including Bangladesh, Bolivia, India, Nicaragua and Viet Nam.

29. By providing basic services and utilities, cooperatives also provide other development benefits or externalities to poor rural populations, in particular in the areas of health and education. For example, electrification helps to develop rural industries, improve food processing and preservation capability, enables schoolchildren to read after sunset and improves information flow through the use of the radio.

30. Lack of transportation in remote areas hinders productivity and local conditions sometimes call for innovative solutions. In Brazil, the Balsa cooperative provides transport for cars and their passengers across a fast-flowing river. This cooperative solution proved economically beneficial to the villagers by providing them with a source of income; the arrangement also saves time and fuel costs for commuters.

31. There has been a steady increase in the number of working poor in the informal economy as more people are unable to find jobs or to start small businesses in the formal economy.[17] In Africa over the past decade, it is estimated that informal work accounted for about 80 per cent of non-agricultural employment, more than

60 per cent of urban employment and over 90 per cent of new jobs.[18] Since the informal sector is not officially recognized, recorded, protected or regulated, its workers are exposed to exploitation and do not become entitled to social protection programmes available in the formal economy.

32. Cooperatives in the informal sector have proved successful among workers such as taxi drivers and small retailers. In Uganda, a successful cooperative was established by shoe-shiners in Kampala. What started as a cooperative organization with five members grew to a full-fledged 600-member cooperative called Shoe-Shiners Industrial Cooperative Society. Members of the cooperative receive benefits such as access to savings and loans and cooperative training programmes. This cooperative also has business dealings with an international shoe polish company and operates a brush-making project.

33. There is encouraging evidence of other cooperatives that have had significant success in providing social insurance to informal self-help groups. In the United Republic of Tanzania for example, around 1,000 market vendors of the Mwanayamala Cooperative in Dar es Salaam pay a small daily rate to rent stands. Part of the rent they pay goes towards providing death and hospital benefits for the cooperative's members. In India, the integrated insurance scheme of the Self Employed Women's Association provides one of the largest contributory social security schemes in the country for informal workers, with insurance coverage for some 32,000 women workers. Similarly, in San Salvador, vendors of the central municipal market have access to a credit scheme for a health fund.

34. Cooperatives can also help to formalize informal economic activities. ILO reports that many cooperatives start out as informal group enterprises but grow to become viable organizations, which eventually register as legal business entities and join the ranks of the formal economy.[19]

B. Contribution to social integration and cohesion

35. The cooperative model can be a useful vehicle to promote social integration and cohesion in the face of inequalities in social capabilities, lack of social power and rights and lack of access to or exclusion from social services, markets and information. In many societies, social disintegration and dysfunction, racial and ethnic tension and civil conflict have been attributed in part to increases in poverty and deepening inequalities. It is increasingly recognized that addressing such inequalities and problems should be a crucial component of poverty reduction strategies.

36. Cooperatives can help to empower and give voice to the poor by enabling them to organize federations and alliances. Efforts to promote the empowerment and participation of the poor in poverty reduction strategies would benefit from the cooperative model because the values and principles of cooperatives stress social responsibility and concern for the community.

37. Cooperatives are often in a good position to promote and contribute to capacity-building and human capital investment because they often play a significant role in member training and education for the development of entrepreneurial and organizational skills and in sharing information. In addition to capacity-building efforts in their communities, cooperatives also enhance human

capital investment through the training and services they offer. For example, credit unions in Bolivia, Ecuador and the Philippines provide education and access to health care and nutritional information to families in their localities. Symposiums, workshops and meetings organized by cooperative groups provide a forum for discussion of key issues and lead to better and more socially responsible decisions.

38. The values that guide cooperative organizations can assist the transmission of social values and promote useful role models. In principle, the cooperative values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others encourage mutual understanding among diverse members, enabling them to work and live together in harmony. Moreover, cooperatives, whether in homogenous or heterogeneous societies, help instil familiarity with democratic processes by means of their procedures for member participation. Members are involved in consensus-building and decision-making. Thus, cooperative members develop commitment, accountability, trust, honesty and respect for the rights of other members. As these experiences are carried by members into other spheres of activity, the larger community benefits. Cooperatives have been helpful in bringing together hostile segments of communities to achieve common interests. In addition, cooperatives, by providing examples of successful members as role models, showcase to their communities that, given cooperative efforts, change and improvement from dire social and economic conditions are possible at the individual level.

39. The participatory and democratically based approach of cooperatives also helps empower the poor and enables them to have more effective representation. Cooperative organizations defend and protect the economic and legal interests of cooperatives through representation to government bodies. For example, farmer cooperatives have advocated for farmers' rights and welfare, including agrarian reform and fair marketing practices, before local and national governments. Thus, the marginalized poor and unemployed, especially those exploited and discriminated against owing to gender, age, disability or other sociocultural characteristics, benefit from membership in cooperatives. Cooperatives can enhance social integration, strengthen participatory democracy and improve societal stability and governance, which are essential ingredients for the success of poverty reduction efforts.

40. Cooperatives often have the necessary inherent flexibility for spatial or geographic reach. Cooperatives are formed where people, including those in remote areas, are willing to organize themselves to achieve a common goal. Thus, cooperatives are effective in providing opportunities and services in those areas not easily reached by private businesses and government services. Compared to other types of enterprise, many cooperatives are able to operate effectively in economically marginalized remote locations. Since most of the poor are in rural and remote areas, cooperatives have the advantage of being organized where they are needed, thereby becoming effective instruments for poverty reduction. As such, cooperatives are naturally suited for reaching the poorest poor. Cooperatives have also been effective in reaching areas of unrest and violence. In Colombia, for example, when banks ceased to operate in areas of conflict, credit unions have been able to survive and provide essential financial services. In post-conflict Afghanistan, pilot credit unions are providing grass-roots reconstruction and financial assistance for agricultural production.[20] Cooperatives have also been active in the relief, reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster in December 2004.

41. Cooperatives can also contribute to increasing social integration and community cohesion when they specifically address the needs of the weakest and less privileged people in society and marginalized groups. Women find that membership in cooperative enterprises enables them to achieve economic empowerment, engage in entrepreneurial activities and stimulate employment generation. It also provides them with services for the growth and protection of their assets. Credit unions, for example, enable women to manage their own finances and to obtain credit for their business ventures. Furthermore, enrolment in health, childcare, community development and consumer cooperatives creates a social safety network that reduces household burdens and allows women to engage in more gainful economic activities. The Self Employed Women's Association in India, for example, serves some 500,000 women through various cooperatives providing services such as doorstep banking, rural production and health and childcare.[21]

42. Associated with the improvement in the status of women are corollary benefits for children and young persons. The cooperative movement takes a particular interest in the situation of children by establishing cooperatives that aim to develop the talents and utilize the time of young persons. In Serbia and Montenegro, for example, youth cooperatives provide young men with help in finding short-term employment. Italy has a programme for youth that provides education on the cooperative method.

43. Cooperatives are also especially useful in organizing older persons for their mutual self-help. In many developed countries, retired older persons have organized to advocate for their own interests in public and private programmes that affect them, as well as to provide personal advice and counsel for those within their own age group. In Switzerland, the Federation of Migros Cooperatives has programmes to help members to assist older persons maintain and make use of their abilities. To address the demand created by the rapid ageing of the rural population, agricultural cooperatives in Japan have expanded services for older members. Health-care cooperatives have also been formed in developed countries faced with an increasing population of older persons. Cooperative Care in rural Wisconsin was formed by caregivers and provides independent living support for their clients.[22]

44. Worker-owned cooperatives provide opportunities for reintegration within society of persons with disabilities through vocational rehabilitation, eventually enabling them to return to the labour force. In the Czech Republic, the Union of Czech and Moravian Production Cooperatives represents 302 entities, of which 50 are cooperatives of persons with disabilities employing 7,000 persons with disabilities. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is running a project to help persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone (see box 2). Service cooperatives are also strong advocates in addressing the concerns and interests of persons with disabilities, such as occupational safety, quality control of consumer commodities and measures to promote healthy living.

Box 2

Persons with disabilities in rural cooperative enterprises

Cooperatives have helped persons with disabilities to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into their society in countries that have experienced conflict. In Sierra Leone, 10 years of hostilities have drastically changed the lives of the population. Though war always takes a grave toll on a country, the situation in Sierra Leone is marked by the maiming of thousands of civilians. One FAO project is providing rural disabled persons with technical and business skills to contribute to their households' welfare and to the development of their communities.

Disabled persons have been trained in blacksmithing, food processing and other income-generating skills, opening the way for them to make a good living and demonstrating that the disabled can make important contributions to the welfare of their families.

With initial start-up capital and inputs provided by FAO, four training and production centres have been established in Bo, Bonthe, Tonkolili and Port Loko districts. The centres are now fully owned and managed by persons with disabilities with support from community elders. Advisory services are provided by government extension agents from the ministries of agriculture, social welfare, health and education.

Blacksmithing was selected as a priority area for training not only because it is an activity that can be readily taken on by persons with disabilities, but also because of its importance in Sierra Leonean society. As grass-roots artisans, blacksmiths produce and repair farm implements and other tools. In this way, they play a vital role in rural areas. The initiative helps to reintegrate persons with disabilities into political, social, economic and cultural life through rural cooperative enterprises.

Though the project represents a modest start in a country where the total number of persons with disabilities is estimated at 250,000, or around 4 per cent of the total population, trainees have started to train fellow disabled community members with disabilities in blacksmithing and other activities. To assist them and facilitate the replication of the programme in additional areas, FAO has produced a training manual on agro-based income-generating activities for rural persons with disabilities.

45. Cooperatives can economically empower indigenous peoples, while helping them to preserve their distinct sociocultural heritage. Cooperatives controlled by indigenous peoples typically utilize local resources and adapt production methods to be consistent with local and distinct social values. Moreover, indigenous peoples, through their cooperatives, can develop the credibility and effective representation needed for negotiating fair market terms. In the Philippines, the objectives of indigenous peoples' cooperatives include, among other things, the preservation and promotion of indigenous culture and the conservation and protection of natural resources and the environment.[23]

46. Migrants in many developed countries benefit from cooperatives, which support them through the provision of affordable housing, vocational training and education. Cooperatives for migrants also serve an important socio-political function by assisting with the resettlement or reintegration of refugees or the internally displaced.

C. Survey of Member States and apex cooperative organizations

47. A questionnaire was sent to all Member States seeking their views on the contribution of cooperatives to poverty eradication. A questionnaire was also sent to apex cooperative organizations to seek their views. This section of the present report is based on the responses received from 35 Member States and 38 apex cooperative organizations (see annexes I and II, respectively). The results of the surveys are summarized in tables 1 and 2 below.

48. A majority of the Member States that participated in the survey reported that their policies for socio-economic development included a role for cooperatives and that cooperatives were promoted as part of an agricultural development strategy. Most Member States also reported that they believed that cooperatives could contribute to poverty reduction. This result is consistent with the responses received from most apex cooperative organizations on this question. In general, apex cooperative organizations believed that the Government in their countries recognized the role cooperatives could play in socio-economic development and agricultural development. In addition, a majority of apex cooperative organizations reported that their affiliated cooperatives helped to reduce poverty primarily among their members and, to a lesser degree, among non-members within their community.

49. On the involvement of cooperatives in national poverty reduction programmes, roughly two thirds of Member States reported that cooperative concerns and perspectives were incorporated into their national poverty reduction programmes, such as the PRSP. In addition, 61 per cent of Member States reported that cooperatives were also involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of the poverty reduction programme or PRSP. It is interesting to note that, on this same issue, less than half of the responding apex cooperative organizations believed that Governments incorporated cooperative concerns and perspectives into their national poverty reduction programmes. A similar proportion of apex cooperative organizations believed that their affiliated cooperative organizations participated in the design, implementation or monitoring of the national poverty reduction strategy.

50. However, responses from apex cooperative organizations on how Governments involved cooperatives in the PRSP process indicated that they believed affiliated cooperatives were involved mainly in the implementation and less in the design and monitoring aspects of PRSPs. A similar pattern was reported by Member States. Some apex cooperative organizations noted that cooperatives were not consulted in the drafting of poverty reduction strategies or PRSPs. This suggests that there is room for Governments to improve the participation of cooperatives in the design, implementation and monitoring of national poverty reduction strategies and programmes.

51. Nearly all Member States reported that there was an agency that dealt with the cooperative sector and implemented programmes on cooperative issues, that the Government had adopted cooperative development policies and that there were

specific actions on cooperative law. These responses suggest that in many countries the basic institutional and legal framework to support cooperatives are in place. To strengthen and support cooperatives, several responding Member States reported having approved and enacted new laws and cooperative codes and having amended and developed old ones to provide a conducive environment for cooperatives that reflected global socio-economic changes. Most apex cooperative organizations, however, perceived that their Governments did not do enough to assist cooperatives in obtaining technical assistance from donors, suggesting that Governments could enhance services in this area to help in capacity-building.

52. On the issue of gender equality, the apex cooperative responses overwhelmingly reported that their affiliated cooperatives promoted gender equality and had no restrictions on women's participation and that women participated in the management of the cooperatives. In order to promote gender equality, apex cooperative organizations reported having taken measures such as capacity-building through leadership and skills development for women, the promotion of non-discriminatory hiring procedures and establishment of quotas for the participation of women in leadership positions within the organization.

Table 1
Summary responses to survey of Member States

	Yes (per cent)	*No (per cent)*	*Number of responses*
Promotion of cooperatives			
Policies for socio-economic development promote the role of cooperatives	94	6	35
Cooperatives are promoted as part of an agricultural development strategy	75	25	32
Role of cooperatives in poverty reduction			
Cooperatives contribute to poverty reduction	89	11	35
Cooperative concerns and perspectives are incorporated into the country's poverty reduction programmes, such as the PRSP	67	33	33
Cooperatives are involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of the PRSP	62	38	24
Supportive environment for cooperative development			
There is an agency that deals with the cooperative sector and implements programmes on cooperative issues	94	6	35
Government has adopted cooperative development policies	91	9	32
There are specific actions on cooperative law	97	3	32
There are capacity-building activities and programmes for members of cooperatives	69	31	32
There are programmes, in partnership with cooperatives, that provide financial support for the formation and/or expansion of cooperatives	76	24	33
There are policies that specifically encourage the membership of disadvantaged groups in cooperatives	76	24	33

Table 2
Summary of responses to survey of apex cooperative organizations

	Yes (per cent)	*No (per cent)*	*Number of responses*
Promotion of cooperatives			
Cooperative organizations that believe their Government includes the role of cooperatives in policies for socio-economic development	83	17	36
Cooperative organizations that believe their Government promotes cooperatives as part of its agricultural development strategy	86	14	36
Role of cooperatives in poverty reduction			
Cooperative organizations whose affiliated cooperatives help to reduce poverty among their members	92	8	37
Cooperative organizations that believe their Government incorporates cooperatives' concerns and perspectives in the country's poverty reduction programmes, such as the PRSP	43	57	35
Cooperative organizations that perceive their affiliated cooperatives as having involvement in the design, implementation or monitoring of the PRSP	42	58	36
Supportive environment for cooperative development			
Cooperative organizations that perceive their Government as assisting cooperatives in obtaining technical assistance from donors	38	62	34
Cooperative organizations that see their affiliated cooperatives as being involved in the drafting of laws and regulations to create a supportive environment for cooperative development	85	15	34
Cooperative organizations that provide education and/or training to the members of affiliated cooperatives	91	9	35
Cooperatives and gender equality			
Apex organizations that promote gender equality among affiliated cooperative society members	82	18	34
Cooperative organizations that perceive their affiliated cooperatives as having restrictions on the participation of women or men in cooperatives	0	100	35
Cooperative organizations whose affiliated cooperatives involve women in the management of the cooperative	97	3	34
Education and training			
Cooperative organizations whose affiliated cooperatives provide indirect benefits to non-members within the community	82	19	33

53. The responses from the survey suggest that there is room for enhanced collaborative partnerships between these Governments and their national cooperative movements to more fully realize the potential of the cooperative enterprise in empowering poor people to lift themselves out of poverty.

III. Challenges and recommendations

54. A special challenge for cooperatives is actively to restructure and revitalize themselves to achieve their full potential in enabling the poor to lift themselves out of poverty. While cooperatives have traditionally focused on the local concerns of

their members and their communities, now, more than ever, cooperatives need to strengthen themselves and adapt to the new realities of the global marketplace.

55. In order to ensure their viability and sustainability, cooperative enterprises need to expand their sources of financing to include non-traditional, non-governmental partners. Given the decline in State-sponsored cooperative networks, cooperatives need to seek new forms of external capitalization to diversify their sources of funding without jeopardizing their democratic approach and autonomy.

56. Increasing globalization, especially the opening up of markets for agricultural products, can and has hit cooperatives in the agricultural sector very hard. To adapt to this new global reality, cooperatives should take advantage of information and biotechnologies, introduce farm policy changes and adopt new approaches and strategies of doing business. To secure their survival, cooperatives should take measures to enable themselves to offer high-quality goods and services at competitive prices by undertaking innovations such as product diversification to adjust to shifting market demands. For example, the Dinesh Bidi Workers Cooperative in Kerala, India, diversified its products from rolled cigarettes (bidis) to food after the decline in demand for bidis. The 40,000 employees, 80 per cent of them women, were retrained to produce processed food instead of rolling cigarettes. In addition, the cooperative has also diversified into integrated circuit technology with the launch of a research and software development centre.

57. Another challenge facing cooperatives is to avoid political or external influence, which makes them vulnerable to changes in political leadership or the vagaries of political interests. Without strong membership, support and participation, cooperatives are left weak, unresponsive and detached from their communities. It is essential for cooperatives to be truly voluntary, autonomous and run by their members to ensure that the interests of members are not compromised.

58. Cooperatives need to broaden and deepen their outreach by promoting self-organization of the poor, underprivileged and marginalized populations in rural and urban areas consistent with the community-driven approach to development. To do so, it is necessary to raise the visibility of cooperatives to showcase the opportunities offered by cooperatives to citizens and to further inform Governments of the potential benefits to society of cooperative activity.

59. Since 70 per cent of the world's poor reside in rural areas, support for cooperatives in the agricultural sector needs to be strengthened, for example by facilitating increased agricultural productivity through sustainable use of natural resources and the creation of non-farm employment. The increased participation of women in cooperatives should be promoted, particularly for rural-based cooperatives, as well as production and service cooperatives by building on their successful experience with microfinance cooperatives.

60. Cooperatives can play an important role in PRSPs. The emphasis on the participatory approach in the PRSP process, specifically the involvement of the poor, offers an opportunity for cooperatives and cooperative apex organizations to be effective participants. Responses from cooperative apex organizations to the questionnaire suggest that cooperatives are more involved in the implementation and less in the design and monitoring aspects of PRSPs.

61. Given their grass-roots reach, cooperatives can help to implement financial programmes that target lower income households through microcredit and

insurance; provide job training and retraining; subsidize the creation of small businesses; and serve as conduits for the delivery of government services. While some mature cooperatives have been consulted in the design and monitoring of PRSPs, more can be done. To involve cooperatives fully, strengthened cooperative federations can provide a more effective voice and representation of the poor in the PRSP process, especially at the national level. At the local level, cooperatives provide the collective force for articulating the needs of the poor in the process and in successfully reaching and benefiting the poor themselves. The PRSP process needs formally to solicit and incorporate the participation of cooperatives in the design, implementation and monitoring stages.

62. Effective partnerships among cooperatives and with the Government should be strengthened. Membership and active participation in apex cooperative organizations, particularly in the International Alliance of Cooperatives, will enhance global awareness and support. Advantages to partnerships include the more effective exchange of resources, training and technical assistance among cooperatives. Through shared databases on good practices, cooperatives can easily discover examples of successful experiences and important lessons learned. Related to this is the need to improve statistics on cooperatives and what impact they have on national economies, as suggested by the quality of responses to the questionnaires on this subject.

63. Governments, in consultation and collaboration with the cooperative movement, can further promote the growth and viability of cooperatives by reviewing, amending and enacting legislation, administrative procedures and requirements that are consistent with the formation and growth of cooperatives in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment. Furthermore, programmes to improve access to technology and to enhance capacity-building by strengthening organizational, leadership and financial skills of cooperative members also need to be introduced or enhanced, to ensure the long-term viability of cooperatives. Finally, Governments need to provide a level playing field for cooperatives as well as utilize cooperatives as competitive suppliers of goods and services along with other businesses in order to promote the role of cooperatives as effective partners in poverty reduction. In countries where they do not yet exist, a joint consultative council or advisory body also needs to be organized to improve dialogue and partnerships between cooperatives, Governments and other social institutions.

64. On the basis of the present report, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations and invite Governments and international organizations, in partnership with cooperatives and cooperative organizations:

(a) **To promote the greater participation of cooperatives and apex cooperative organizations in poverty reduction, in particular the design, implementation and monitoring of PRSPs where they exist. In this regard, it will be important also to take steps to improve the collection and dissemination of information and data on the role of cooperatives in poverty reduction and their contribution to social and economic development;**

(b) **To review, amend or enact legislation, including administrative procedures and requirements, in order to enhance the growth and sustainability of cooperatives and apex cooperative organizations in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment, to broaden and deepen the outreach of cooperatives among the poor, in particular those in the rural or agricultural**

sector, and to promote the participation of women and vulnerable groups in cooperatives across all sectors;

(c) To introduce and support programmes to improve the access of cooperatives to technology and enhance capacity-building by strengthening the organizational, management and financial skills of members of cooperatives and, in this regard, to assist cooperatives in obtaining the necessary technical assistance from donors;

(d) To provide a political, social and economic enabling environment that will ensure and protect the autonomy and democratic principles of cooperatives, while at the same time ensuring a level playing field for cooperatives as competitive suppliers of goods and services to the Government and the private sector. Such a supportive environment can be promoted, inter alia, by effective partnerships and dialogue between Governments and cooperatives through joint consultative councils and/or advisory bodies.

Notes

[1] See *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), part I, commitment 9, subpara. (h).

[2] Johnston Birchall. *Cooperatives and the Millennium Development Goals* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2004).

[3] Andrew Bibby and Linda Shaw (eds.), *Making a Difference: Cooperative Solutions to Global Poverty* (Manchester, Cooperative College, 2005).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Verghese, Kurien. "India's milk revolution: investing in rural producer organizations", paper presented at the World Bank conference "Scaling up poverty reduction: a global learning process and conference", Shanghai, 25-27 May 2004.

[6] "Can Cooperatives save the world?", *Developments: the International Development Magazine*, Department of International Development, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

[7] *The Credit Union Difference*, vol. 7, No. 1 (World Council of Credit Unions, April 2005).

[8] Ibid.

[9] Bibby and Shaw, op. cit.

[10] Johnston Birchall, Poverty Reduction through Self-help: *Rediscovering the cooperative Advantage* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2003).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Bibby and Shaw, op. cit.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Birchall, *Poverty Reduction ...*

[16] Bibby and Shaw, op. cit.

[17] *Decent Work and the Informal Economy* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2002).

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] *The Credit Union Difference*, vol. 7, No. 1 (World Council of Credit Unions, April 2005).

[21] Bibby and Shaw, op. cit.

[22] Birchall, *Poverty Reduction* ...

[23] Birchall, *Cooperatives* ...

Annex I

List of responding Member States

Bahrain
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Chile
Colombia
Cyprus
Dominican Republic
Ethiopia
Fiji
Georgia
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Lithuania
Malaysia
Maldives
Mexico
Mongolia
Myanmar
Panama
Philippines
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Senegal
Serbia and Montenegro
Singapore
Slovakia
Sri Lanka
Syrian Arab Republic
Thailand
Trinidad and Tobago
Turkey
United Republic of Tanzania
Zambia

Annex II

List of responding apex cooperative organizations

All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives

Asociación Colombiana de Cooperativas

Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions

Belgian Boerenbond

Botswana Cooperative Association

Central Union of Consumer Societies of the Russian Federation (Centrosojuz)

Confederación de Cooperativas Agrarias de España

Confederación de Cooperativas de Colombia

Confederación Paraguaya de Cooperativas

Confederazione Cooperative Italiane (Confcooperative)

Conseil Canadien de la Cooperation

Cooperativas Agrarias Federadas

Cooperative Association of the Czech Republic

Cooperative Bank of Kenya

Cooperative Central Bank (Cyprus)

Cooperative League of Thailand

Cooperative Union of Serbia

Cooperative Union of Slovenia

Cyprus Turkish Cooperative Central Bank

Federation of Free Farmers Cooperatives

Groupement National de la Coopération

Institute for Indonesian Cooperative Development Studies

Department of International Cooperation (Republic of Korea)

Japanese Workers Cooperative Union

Kooperative Förbundet

Liga de Cooperativas de Puerto Rico

Lithuanian Union of Consumer Societies

National Association of Cooperative Savings and Credit Unions

National Cooperative Federation of Nepal

National Cooperative Union of India

National Federation of Workers and Consumers Insurance Cooperatives (Zenrosai)

National Mutual Insurance Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives (Zenkyoren)

National Union of Italian Cooperatives

Pellervo (Confederation of Finnish Cooperatives)

Riksbyggen Ekonomisk Forening

Sri Lanka Consumer Cooperative Societies Federation

Union Régionale des Coopératives d'Epargne et de Crédit du Bam

Viet Nam Cooperative Alliance